

Tourism Marketing in Masai Mara National Reserve

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis was to describe the channels in tourism marketing of Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR) in Kenya to attract tourists to the destination and the developments of interactive activities with the communities around the area. The thesis was aimed at establishing marketing methods to enable MMNR to achieve the status of an all season destination.

The theoretical framework of the thesis focused on the communication process, an overview of the tourism industry in Kenya, factors affecting tourism and the development trends in regard to destination being competitive. The main characteristics of various destinations in Kenya was highlighted in the thesis with an in depth research of the tourism aspects in Masai Mara. Questionnaires to groups of people involved in different levels in Masai Mara added more insight from real life situations.

The results of the thesis detailed that tourists utilized a wide variety of tourism promotion methods. The internet was the most common advertising media for low cost advertising. Trade fairs and exhibitions were used to promote the destinations. Distributing of information to different media was the most effective in public relations. Suggestions for further developments in Masai Mara are service delivery, communication and better infrastructure. One of the important aspects is to diversify the tourist products to be more complete.

Keywords: Marketing, tourism, communication, Masai Mara

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1 INTRODUCTION

The business world in the current market is very competitive, retaining and enticing new customers is very crucial for any business. The tourism industry is not any different and its one of the largest industries with the highest growth rate compared to other business. This thesis will deal with tourism marketing in Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR) which is located in Kenya. The main goal of the study will be to establish what marketing methods should be used for Masai Mara as a tourist destination.

This topic was chosen because of the author's interest in tourism marketing and the possibility of working in the tourism industry in future. The author had previous experience working in the tourist industry in Kenya and was inspired to research the main problems that hinder the growth of the tourism industry to establish different marketing channels for the destinations in Kenya to their gain full potential.

The technological advance in communication has increased the opportunities in marketing and this has increased the level of competition. This has lead many organizations in the tourism industry to using the internet for its effectiveness and cheaper marketing options. As a result, they have benefited from the communication methods as they are able to contact, create and manage relationships with the customers efficiently through detailed and accurate analysis of customer data using various information technologies.

One of the main purposes of this thesis is to provide an overall view of the top tourism products in Kenya, so that a reader who does not have any previous knowledge about Kenyan tourism can understand what Kenya offers as a tourist destination. In addition to explaining the basics of tourism marketing in Masai Mara, the thesis will provides answers to the following research questions:

- 1) How MMNR is marketed as a tourist destination?
- 2) How to improve marketing at MMNR?
- 3) What are the factors affecting tourism in Kenya and MMNR?

This thesis will start by explain the theory in tourism and marketing in connection with the aspects involved in the concept. The next step is to create an understanding of the tourism industry in

Kenya, the current and future developments and focusing on tourism products in Masai Mara National Reserve. The research consists of two questionnaires that were sent to tourists, managers and employees, local business owners in Masai Mara and tour operators in Kenya. The data that was received was analyzed and the acquired information was presented in the results.

On the basis of the analysis, the author will provide suggestions on how the organisations in Masai Mara can improve marketing communications and diversify the tourist activities. The final chapter will include a discussion of the entire process of writing the thesis.

2 TOURISM

2.1 Tourism concept

Tourism can be considered to include any type of activity that involves short duration visits where people move to destinations away from the place where they live, work or study for leisure, business purposes and other activities that they are not receiving any remuneration from the visited destination. Tourism is the most rapidly growing industry worldwide and the World Tourism Organization forecasts that international tourist arrivals will grow approximately 3% and 4% in 2010. However the International tourist arrivals were estimated to have declined worldwide by 4% in 2009 to 800 million, but the international arrivals are expected to exceed 1.5 billion people by 2020. This is an indicator that businesses working within the tourism industry, directly or indirectly will receive higher benefits and growth in the future depending on the level of investment and infrastructure in the tourist destinations. (World Tourism Organization, date of retrieval 9.12.2010.)

Tourists traveling to their destination of choice, demand certain main goods and services. These includes: - transportation facilities, food and accommodation, entertainment services, infrastructure, security etc. This is to ensure that their needs and wants are fulfilled in order to have a wonderful experience at the destination. With the estimated increase of tourist arrivals in developing countries, the current level of production should be increased in order to meet the rise in demand, to avoid stretching the available production between the residents and the tourists. This will therefore result into positive effects in the economy. The Increase in production and income for the producers and the tourism sector demands more manpower, hence an increase in employment with a significant economic growth. This translates to higher levels of per capita GDP in areas that are favorite tourist destinations and more employment opportunities.

Tourism can be classified based on three overall categories on the characteristics of the travel by tourists to destinations around the world. These are:

- Domestic tourism, this constitute of people living in a particular country, go on long or short holidays and day trips in their own country.
- Inbound tourism, this refers to all international tourists entering another country traveling from their home country.

- Outbound tourism, this refers to persons who are traveling away from their normal place of residence in their home country to visit other international destinations. (Rowe, Smith & Borein 2002, 3 – 6.)

Tourism is essential to many countries around the world, they have benefited from having certain aspects that make the destination attractive to tourist. These destinations have a combination of various aspects such as sun, sand and the ocean, captivating sceneries and land marks, wildlife, mountains etc. Over the past decade, there have occurred some changes to the purposes people have been traveling. Most of these events have been shaped by the increase in knowledge and demystification of different destinations. Many of the destination have build new infrastructure and with better technology they have surpassed there limits to be included in the top destinations category. The health industry has an increased number of people traveling to countries that offer more specialized or cheaper health care services. However some of them are in cosmetic surgery where the individual cannot be treated in the home country due to the complex nature of the surgery, government restriction or insurance policies. (Rowe et al 2002, 6 – 11.)

The other characteristic that has changed the trend of tourism is the emergences of new destinations that offer dreams that are imaginable. These are manmade destinations that envision your dream destination, at the same time allowing you to be a part of the construction team with your ideas to suite your desires. The Middle East has been the forefront player in the having destinations that offer different types of activities that one can enjoy and they are situated at short distance apart. One example is Dubai that offers top luxury hotel suites, winter skiing in the desert, desert safaris, resorts, shopping and entertainment, world class sporting events. This would probably set the standards of the future markets of manmade creations in the tourism industry. (Time, date of retrieval 12.01.2011)

2.2 Main segments in tourism

A segment describes a part of a market where the people involved have similar characteristics; this makes it easier to target the group when marketing goods or services. In tourism there are two major segments, which are business and leisure travelers. Business travelers, choose their destinations depending on the activities that they are participating. This can for normal business trips where multinational companies have different offices located in different countries and continents or in new markets that the companies may be breaking ground. However the economics of

cheaper cost of labor, production cost and raw materials also dominate the purpose of this segment of travelers.

The other factor that influences business travelers is global events and convention. This is one of the most lucrative forms of travel as it involves governments and private sector. This combination has allowed the events to be bigger and more demanding and therefore creating an avenue for interaction and exchanging ideas. Global events involve government officials, senior management professionals, entrepreneurs, human right activists and other major players in making crucial decisions from global warming to security and other important issues that would make differences in the world. Majority of companies hold major annual conventions for their associates giving corporate staff a chance to air their view and opinions with the management staff. Conventions can be regional, national, continental or international. Continental convections limit their meeting to a single continent while international convections have more foreign nationalities and can take part in different countries or continents each year. (Mill 2010, 38 – 42.)

Business travelers have had more and more demanding schedules and getting time to spend with their families have been being stretched wide and far while also yearning to enjoy the new environment away from the offices. This has led to them combining business and leisure in order to achieve both of their goals. This has gained a lot of momentum and more business travelers are more likely to return to areas that they once visited for business for leisure activities.

Leisure travel can be divided to categories based on the purpose of travel. Visiting friends and family is the most common they can be within a short distance from your home to flying to a different country or continents. This can be from a day to few weeks duration; most of them can be unplanned or requires very limited help from travel agents. Touring vacations are more focused on popular areas that have recognizable landmarks, beautiful sceneries and activities to participate. Most of the travelers would purchase the trips as package deals or make their own arrangement on transportation and accommodation.

Outdoor trips are for individuals who are interested in real adventure and being close to nature. This includes camping, fishing, hunting, mountain climbing etc. There is a wide range of places that they can find the adventure, these are forests, jungles, rivers, mountains and oceans. These features present a chance to experience nature at its best. Resort vacations travelers are more interested in the marvels of nature by relaxing, getting away from the hustle and bustle of normal

day life and getting entertained. The environment is more interesting to enjoy walks around, spas, spring and geysers are in the itinerary. All over the world there are numerous numbers of cities which vary in size and over half of the world population lives and works in this environment. Cities offer unique history which can be traced back to past centuries exhibited by the architecture of buildings/monuments or preserved in museums to the new architecture that builds a contrast of the past and the future, lifestyle are different in each city; they present different environments that influence their way of life from working hours, restaurants, hotels etc. and culture that defines what the city stands for or what the people living there want to be associated with. These factors have made city life to be very dynamic in attracting tourists who also use cities as entry point to different countries. Compared to other segments of travel, the cities have the best infrastructure, amenities etc. Most of the organizations and governments operate from the cities and many of the government officials or business travelers who are attending meeting, conferences or other functions are situated in the cities. Events that are held in cities be divided in two, small events that last for a day such as music festivals, sports events etc. and major annual events in the cities have been very successful as tourist attractions, they range from sports events such as the Olympics, Football World Cup to city carnival events that last over several day such as the Rio festival, Mardi Gras in New Orleans etc.

Theme parks and amusement parks are most popular with the young generation; however they have activities that cater for all ages, therefore making them ideal for family visits. There are diverse activities that tourists can participate in, such as thrill rides, zoo's, water parks, ice skating etc. Cruise travel has had tremendous growth in tourism; this is as a result of new technological advancement in designs that have transformed the cruise ship to a moving city. They cater for tourists who are seeking exciting and entertaining activities. Many of the cruise ships have specific routes where the travelers are returned to the point of origin at the end of the cruise journey. There travelers are able to enjoy many activities in the cruise ship such as theater performances, dining at sea, casino facilities etc. to shopping in a new city during the day, by sunset they are back to enjoy the night in the oceans and seas and by sunrise they can have breakfast in another city. (Mill et al 2010, 42 – 52.)

2.3 Factors affecting tourism in developing countries

There are many factors that affect tourism around the world, these factor hinder the tourist destination from reaching and exploiting their full potential. In developing countries, the main factors

include security; this is the most important and determining factor when tourists are making a decision to choose their destination. Over the past decade there have been major terrorism incidences that have targeted tourist destinations. As a result there have been more stringent measures that have been taken to ensure all the travelers are safe. This has increased the number of checks in the airports increasing the time spent during travel and affecting destination that are considered to be venerable to terrorist attacks. Most of the developing countries that have been grouped in this category have experienced travel advisories that caution tourist from traveling to these destinations and before they are lifted, the tourism industry in this countries have lost major part of their revenue and business activities. There has been arise in civil unrest in many developing countries, this has created a vacuum in the tourism industry as it's not clear when it will end and businesses to return to their normal routine. There are major security issues before and after general elections in the developing countries, this is because there is uncertainty if there will be political unrest during this period. This affects many businesses as the tourist numbers drop to very low numbers, leading the industry to stagnation. With the general elections in developing countries held after around every five years, the same trend has been witnessed and this affects the market stability.

The tourism industry requires investment in infrastructure, to ensure that goods and services at the destinations are delivered. In many developing countries there has been a problem in maintaining the infrastructures that is available or increasing the level of infrastructure, this is mostly in roads which can be attributed to the government not being keen to invest more resources to the tourism industry. However the private sector has been on the forefront in building of other infrastructures such as hotels, lodges, resorts etc. which had been primarily targeted to the tourists and not the local communities. This has resulted to high housing cost for the residents at the destination, making it near to impossible for residents to own property around the major destinations such as the Indian Ocean coastline. Marketing of the destination is mostly by tour operators who have branches in many parts of the world, this offers high competition to local tour operators who cannot match the marketing power of the international tour operators. This gives an advantage to international tour operators as they are able to market many destinations to their big customer base. However they collect most of the profit generated by the tourism industry and most of the companies are owned in other parts of the world and a very small percentage benefits the local communities at the destination. (Matheson and Wall 2005, 97-121.)

Tourism in many destinations in developing countries depends on seasons. These are divided in high and low season. During the high season the tour operators normally target tourists from other parts of the world, they have to maximize their profits by charging high premiums for their services. This locks out most of the local tourists during most of the festive holidays and other important occasion. During the low season the tour operators target local, national and low budget travelers to stay afloat in the tourism industry. The constraints given, are made worse by the high fixed costs is the effect of seasons. Some destinations have a very small operating window, based on the rule of thumb relevant to British attractions, that maximum capacity or volume of demand will be experienced in only a given number of days in the year. On each of these days an average of about 1% of the year's total volume will be received. Where the site is located near a holiday resort, it is not unusual for over 45% of the year's volume to be achieved over about few weeks. The role of market is to contribute to the generation of demand, outside the limited number of peak days. (Middleton 2004, 110-145.)

Dwindling revenues from tourism and economies in recession have always been a major factor affecting tourism; this has given rise to exploration in protected environments in search of natural mineral which have a bigger financial return than tourism. These presents a major dilemma for the government to decided whether to license the exploration of minerals or preserve the environment for tourism. However this might trigger an increase in illegal mining of the minerals as there have been major problems from poaching of wildlife after hunting was banned from the parks and reserve to protect some animal species such as elephants and rhinoceros from extinction. Culture of the people around the parks and reserves has always been shaped by the wildlife and environment. The population around most of the destination such as parks and reserve has increased conflicts with the communities that within the surrounding area. This is mainly because most of the communities demand their rights to use the resources in these areas or in cases where the protected wildlife has attacked people and destroyed property. The structures that are in place to handle this conflicts, may take a long duration of time from the investigation to establish what happened to the point compensation and in many cases the compliant may take the law into their own hands resulting to big losses and more conflict of interest. (Mara North, date of retrieval 27.02.2011)

3 TOURISM MARKETING

3.1 Marketing concept

Marketing involves with identifying, anticipating and satisfying human and social needs. A more in detailed definition of marketing management is defined by Kotler & Keller as “the art and science of choosing target markets and getting, maintaining and growing the customers through creating, delivering and communicating superior customer value”. Some examples of things that can be marketed are goods, services, organization and information. For my research, tourism can be regarded as a service and the customers are the tourists. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 5-9.)

However the product being marketed is a service, the basic principles of marketing can apply in all situations either in goods or services. The Key elements of marketing services are in the intangibility and variability. The services are intangible because they can rarely be tested in advance before the time of purchase. Also, the consumer cannot be sure of what benefit they are about to receive until after the purchase, which increases the uncertainty of what should be expected by the customer. That is why there should be stringent precautions for evaluation of the services that have been advertised to reduce any arising risks. The services cannot be owned, however they can be accessed for a limited period of time. These services are inseparable because the production of the service happens at the same time it is received. This has provides a difficult situation in making sure the service is received on a positive way to the satisfaction of the customer. Another key component of a service is they cannot be prepared in advance to be delivered on a later date to a customer who has purchased the services. The last component is that every time a service is received, it is a new production and cannot be the same to other services that are received by other customers making it a very unique and customized product. (Adcock, Bradfield, Halborg and Ross 2005, 173-178.)

The traditional depiction of marketing activities is the marketing mix and the four P's: product, price, promotion, and place. While there are numerous differences between products and services, the marketing mix idea can still be applied to marketing services. The four P's of the tourism marketing service are

- The product is visiting different destination that offer a wide range of activities and sceneries. The actual product includes the tangible elements such as nature walks, game

drives, visiting local tribes to experience their way of life and culture. The core product is also the benefits that the tourist receives from whole journey incidences to share with family, friends and associates. The opportunity to be part of another culture or a way of life and a different environment is what makes the product unique for tourists that visit Masai Mara National Reserve.

- The price is the costs incurred by the tourists to get transport to/from the Masai Mara, accommodation and other services. For the resorts it's the costs they have incurred to set up the establishment and also run day to day activities in delivering services to their customers.
- Place or distribution includes how the product is provided to the customers. Availability of room for accommodation and accessibility to the resorts and spas can be classified in this element.
- Promotion is also referred to the promotional mix. This may be divided into four areas: personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and public relations. Personal selling for the tour packages that takes place through tourism trade fairs. Also, the personal sources of information through contact that is from tourist word of mouth. Advertising is through different media: internet (web pages or banners), newspapers, television, or radio. Sales promotion can be during the low season to boost the number of arrivals. Public relations are anything the various establishments in Masai Mara National Reserve, does with the public like organize open days to view the property, educational trips for students etc.

Following the assessment at different areas of the tourism marketing mix, it is important to understand the three stages of marketing: pre-consumption, during-consumption, and after-consumption. This study is mostly concentrating on the pre-consumption or the effort to attract more tourists to Masai Mara National Reserve. During-consumption is when the tourists have finalized their itinerary visiting MMNR. This is actually a very important part of the marketing since many of the tourists have a picture of what to expect and if the quality of services is not to the distinguished level it might taint the Masai Mara image. The internal marketing has to have a strategic plan of how they will market their services to potential customers. After-consumption is how different resorts at MMNR keep contact with the tourists for future business. (Adcock et al 2005, 15-16.)

Strategic planning is based on traditional views of marketing which is very simplified to present its meaning as a product or service has to be produced and then sold off to potential customers. However, this does not work automatically as there is more than one provider for any goods and services that is available in the market, giving the customers many choices to choose from depending on their preference. The mass market available is actually in a large number of different segments which have their own wants, preferences and reasons for consuming the services that's suits them in their desired manner. As a result, the traditional organizations and companies value their contribution as a part of a value delivery process. This process has three phases: choose the value, provide the value, and communicate the value. The choosing of the value takes places when the research about segmentation, targeting, and positioning is done to establish the criteria to be used in reaching the customers. Providing the value is determined by specific product price, availability and features to assist the customer into making a choice. The communicating of the value is to publicize and promote the product to the customers to sensitize them on details to enable them to make a decision.

The most integral part of the above named stages is that the value is determined directly by the market in regard to the level of demand. The strategic planning process should take into consideration from the commencement, the companies or organization ought to research if there is value of demand and the process must be continuous, using the feedback that is gathered to better the process, by making adjustment to accommodate the current and future market demands (Kotler et al 2006, 23-30.)

3.2 Tourism marketing promotion

Advertising can be defined to include any paid marketing activity to influence potential customers to purchase goods and services. Advertisements are strategically placed and precisely timed for the general public and it's very difficult to collect feedback or distinguish their effectiveness in reaching your intended consumers. They act a promotion tool as many organizations are able to target and generate publicity of their goods and services. (Belch 2004, 13-16.)

There are many different advertising methods that organizations can choose from or combine to deliver their desired results, depending on their business objectives. When determining the most effective media to reach potential customers in the tourism industry, many of the stake holders

involved such as hotel, lodges, tour operators, governments etc. has a wide range of choices, these are print media which include newspapers, magazines, posters, billboards. Print media is able to reach a large population; tourism stake holders who choose to use it have the opportunity to accomplish these goals to their target market. Local entertainment guides, newspapers, magazines that are published on a daily, weekly or monthly can be used to promote events and the contact details to get more information.

Broadcast media include television and radios are a perfect tool for promotion. However they are very expensive, with an advantage of being very informative and reaching a wide range of audience. There are tour operators who have their own television shows about traveling to different destinations around the world, while participating in activities, events that are integrated in the cultures of the people living in the area. This generates large following and the audience can rely on information provided by the companies to travel to such destinations. An example such a television show is The Amazing Race by Travelocity. Documentaries have embraced the broadcast media on documenting different activities and events around the world. Documentaries share the experiences of many destinations, which generate revenues for the broadcasting and documenting companies by selling the documentaries but on the other side educating and promoting the destinations.

Electronic media includes websites and emails, have the highest potential as promotional tool and the future of advertising. Websites have opened up a large market for advertising and they adverts are placed in other websites, to link customers to their sites. The organizations only pay for the adverts if customers click on them, making it cheaper to reach the targeted customers. Advertisements have also been placed on video clips, so as to appear before the actual video starts to play or by having a link on the video clip. Emails can be used as an excellent tool for marketing; this is achieved through direct marketing which forms a direct contact between the seller and the buyer. Organizations are able to have email databases where they can modify the messages sent to their customers to be more personalized. They can also include brochures, post cards, and promotional offers, all this additions can increase value to the promotional material. Direct mail is much cheaper than other alternatives to reaching customers, business contacts and with a high probability that the mail will be received by the targeted person. (Finkernet, date of retrieval 14.04.2011)

Sales promotion has the purpose of offering an extra incentive for the consumer to entice them more on purchasing the services. Tour operators are given special discounted contract rates on accommodation in the hotels, lodges and resorts. This gives the tour operator a higher bargaining opportunity of selling accommodation and higher sales for the hoteliers. Sales promotions can be anything that adds value to the product to the benefit of the customer. However it should be done on rare or special occasion to ensure that the product retains its value. In the tourism industry, sales promotion is more aimed towards the tour operators and companies. The objective is to have a ready market from the companies when they are having special events or meetings and the tour operators act as sales people to promote the company's products. (Belch et al 2004, 18-19.)

Public relations can be defined as the practice of communicating information to the public through various media, with the objective of changing their perspective on how they view a given subject. Public relations mainly target a segment of people who have similar opinions and not the entire public. But the message being delivered can be changed to address different segments of people to achieve the general goal. (Belch et al 2004, 20.) In the tourism industry, this is a very important tool as public relations is used to create strategies to restore confidence to the tourist in destinations that have gone through difficult situation such as civil war, terrorism etc. to achieve their full potential. However public relation within business to business is extensive in the tourism industry as hotels, lodges and resorts work together with tour operators as they are more important to them in generating business.

Tourism marketing promotion has many benefits as the organizations are able to formulate strategies on their future standards to gain their full potential and competitive advantage. However organizations should be able to deliver on their promises to the tourists on their destinations of choice and the organizations going the extra mile to ensure that they have a memorable experience as there will be always competitors who are offering similar services. Customers' satisfaction is the main goal for many organizations.

3.3 Tourism hospitality marketing

Hospitality marketing can be well understood by getting to the core of where it starts, this is the market. A market can be described as a place where you can buy or sell goods and services. In today's business world, companies have categorized people into different groups based on their

needs and want. This creates competition among the companies that are trying to satisfy their customers and to make a choice it depends on how much they are will to pay or can afford to pay. This creates market demand which is measured by volume of the number of goods and services that are sold and value depending on the amount of money that is paid to acquire the goods and service.

Hospitality is described and measured by the amount of care, handling to detail towards an excellent reception to your customers who are the tourists. However not everyone wants the same package being offered by the organization and this opens the environment for market segments in hospitality marketing. These categories are budget, mid-market and luxury. The level at which the customer chooses, has a price depending on the category and level of satisfaction to different customer needs and wants. With the changing environment in the business world there will always be high and low points in the tourism industry capacity and this affects the volume and value that is accessible This is hospitality marketing capacity which includes organizations that offer star rating classification for hotels and restaurants, intention of travel to the choice of destination, emerging markets that offer different experiences. (Bowie & Buttle 2004, 4-10.)

There are many challenges in the hospitality industry; the most imminent is unoccupied or empty hotel rooms and restaurants that are receiving guests numbers below their capacity. This adds to the huge weight of the large numbers of staff and resources available to deal with other challenges which include increased competition from other competitors, globalization, customers demands on green technologies to cut on carbon emissions, financial turmoil, civil and government unrest, natural and manmade calamities. To overcome such kind of problems the hospitality marketers should target the local market which offers regular revenue flows and are not affected by changing trends of travel destinations, targeting and creating awareness to small and medium sized companies that are in the local market. However most of the organizations depend on national and international tourists' who's resources and business forms a major percentage of the organizations revenue.

In order to maintain and attract more national and international tourists, most organizations join forces with other organizations that have properties worldwide and a large customer network. They are obliged to provide the same quality of services that are demanded by being part of the chain. They benefit by getting worldwide customer service centers, marketing access to international business travelers, online booking support etc. This ensures the organizations are on to the

same or higher level of competition as most of the well known brand hotels who's customers can associate with the high standards of hospitality services provided.

There are new technologies that take hospitality marketing to a higher level, this are the e-commerce marketing solutions that offer websites that can offer multifunctional services to membership customers. This includes online membership renewals and sales services, hotel particulars and restaurant information in different languages, membership benefits and special offer. Customer relationship managements (CRM) have enhanced communication by making it easier to access customer information and easier to communicate. CRM has enabled organizations to manage databases, marketing and monitoring programs, member's recognition, getting results in real time. This has made it easier to target the different segments of people when marketing their organizations by creating direct mailing campaigns which are simple to create and schedule them to targeting the specified customers. (Bowie et al 2004, 10-25.)

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research methods

There are two methods that author has used in this research, they are quantitative and qualitative. These methods were aimed to achieve the target of the specific objectives of the research. Qualitative research was the main method used to determine statements assigned to variables that were not adequately measured using statistical figures in research findings. Quantitative research method was the main method used to gather information about the study. (Ghuri & Gronhaug 2005, 105.)

In the questionnaires the author used open ended questions and close ended questions to collect information from the respondents. Open ended questions enabled the respondents to give as much information as possible and create an avenue for them to give their views on other areas that should be addressed. Closed ended questions had multiple choice answers for the respondents to freely answer the questions with the best alternative they desired.

4.2 Data collection

The research was carried out targeting tourists, (See *APPENDIX 2 on page 50*) lodge managers at Masai Mara National reserve, managers of travel agencies, employees and local residents around the Masai Mara National Reserve. (See *APPENDIX 1 on page 49*) The Questionnaires were sent on email to the author's main contact working for a travel agency in Kenya who agreed to assist in distributing and collecting the questionnaires from the respondents with the aiming at achieving objectives of the research. This was a critical point in the process a personal touch was required in the interaction and in clearing out any prejudice that respondents would have mainly with the local residents in Masai Mara.

All in all, 155 persons were contacted. Out of the total number 45 were tourists, ten managers from Masai Mara, ten managers from travel agencies, 45 employees and 45 local residents who were randomly selected to answer the questionnaires. The study commenced on 2.03.2011 to 21.04.2011. Many of the respondents requested additional time to return the questionnaires on a later date which the author added one week to get as many responses as possible. The author send 20 emails requesting phone interviews with the managers at Masai Mara. However after

numerous requests and rescheduling to have a time set for the phone interviews, the managers contacted did not respond to the author's request of having the phone interviews. The sample size of the research was 50 (See *TABLE 2 on page 33*) which included three managers, 14 tourists, 18 employees and 15 local residents. Some respondents did not return the questionnaires. There was a limitation of sensitivity of research information that is, some respondents were evasive in submitting information as they thought the research was for financial gain. This was solved by assuring the respondents that, the information given was to be used for academic purpose only and it would be treated with confidentiality.

4.3 Data analysis

The data for this research was collected from the questionnaires. The data analysis will depend on the research problems on the data collected. The first step was to review all the questionnaires by reading through and making sure all the questions had been answered. The next step was to classifying the questionnaires by creating categories depending on the questions and different groups in the same order by having different colors for easier identification. The data collected should have a connection with the theory and the research problems.

The next step was coding by assigning the selected data to useable information. This was done using SPSS and excel, corresponding to each variable for all the respondents to evaluate the data. The data was presented in tables and figures to provide answers to the reach questions and assist the author to draw up a clear conclusion of the research findings.

5 TOURISM MARKETING IN MASAI MARA NATIONAL RESERVE

5.1 Tourism in Kenya

The tourism industry in Kenya has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade, making it the fastest growing industry in the country and has been the highest foreign exchange source for the government. In 2009 tourist arrivals by air and sea were 952,481 representing a 30.7% increase compared to past year arrivals. The tourist arrivals market share was 48% European, 24% Africa, 14% Americans, 12% Asia and 2% from the oceanic region. In 2010 tourist arrivals were 1.1 million, better than the previous record that was set in 2007 which was 1.05 million. This can be attributed by increased marketing activities by Kenya Tourism Board, which has marketing departments in various cities around the world such as Barcelona, Germany, Paris etc. (Ministry of Tourism Kenya, date of retrieval 15.04.2011)

The tourism industry in Kenya begun to take shape in the mid-1980s and the 1990s, after a period of civil strife and mismanagement that had completely destroyed the industry that had flourished, putting the country as an emerging top travel destination in Africa. During that period, wildlife which is traditionally the country's prime attraction was reduced drastically due to indiscriminate poaching. The tourism industry was deprived of experienced operators, who moved to other lucrative markets thus greatly affecting services and infrastructure disintegrated. The ban on international ivory trade in 1989 came at a very crucial time that Kenya had lost 85% of its elephant population.

The Kenyan Government has recognized the tourism industry as an important sector of the economy and they have set stringent measures to reviving the industry. This has been done in conjunction with conservation agencies around the world to sensitize the public on the importance of the wildlife and ways in how they communities living around the parks and reserves can benefit from tourism. However poaching is still a problem, because ivory is a commodity that is highly prized and outsourced in the Far East where it is used as ornaments, medicine, aphrodisiacs and family seals. (Global post, date of retrieval 07.01.2011)

An integrated tourism master plan prepared by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as requested by the Ministry of Tourism, Kenya Wildlife Services and Antiquities detailed that Kenya has a variety of tourist attractions and untapped potential. However these have not been

supported by government implementing body and as a result the tourist industry faces many impediments. Although recommendations as to the development of the industry have been put forward they have not been implemented to its effect, but with better focus to the future, the Kenya's tourism industry can achieve its goals. (Forest Landscape and Kenya's Vision 2030, date of retrieval 07.01.2011)

Tourism in Kenya is divided in categories known as safaris which are wildlife, beach, adventure, cultural, sports, bird watching and business travelers. Many of the tour operators combine different safaris to give the tourists an all round experience of Kenya. Wildlife safaris are one of the best selling safaris in Kenya; they include visits to reserve and national parks where the tourist can choose on mode of transport to use when watching the wildlife. These are day and night game drives, balloon safaris over the wilderness, guided walking safaris, camel and horse safaris which all offer different experiences. Kenya has a wide array of wildlife such as lions, elephants, buffalos, rhinos, cheetahs, leopards etc. that can be viewed in their natural environment or in zoo's or animal orphanages around the country. Kenya is the only country in the world that has a national park in its capital city; this offers a great chance to view wildlife in their natural habitat within a short drive from the city. (Magical Kenya, date of retrieval 15.04.2011)

Beach safaris are located along the Kenya coastline of the Indian Ocean. This is most popular destination for tourist visiting Kenya, with a combination of good weather and traditional characteristics of sun, sand and ocean. The Kenyan coast offers a wide range of marine life, traditional cultures and historic land marks and building architecture. It's also an entry point for tourist arrivals to the country by cruise. The natural environment in Kenya attracted many tourists for adventure safaris; these are mountain climbing, white water rafting, big game fishing etc. This form of tourism has a high potential for growth in the Kenyan tourism industry. There are many cultures in Kenya, however most of them have changed over the years and there are only two that are very prominent, they are the Masai and the Samburu. Cultural safaris have been utilized to earn revenue for the Masai and Samburu people; this is an initiative from the government to preserve the culture for future generation.

Sports activities have marketed Kenya as a destination for high endurance mainly in athletics where Kenya has dominated in major events around the world. The high altitude training in the Kenyan rift valley region has been a major destination for training in long distance marathons for athletes around the world. Kenya was a host county for events in World Rallying Championship

and Africa's representative. This was a major event that attracted many tourists and when it was cancelled from the WRC rally calendar in 2002, it was a major setback for Kenyan tourism. However, there have been other rally races that have been held in Kenya on annual events such as the East African Rallying Championship and the Rhino charge rally which supports conservation by raising money to fence National parks such as Aberdares National park which has been completed, Mau escarpment, Mt. Kenya and Mt Eburu. (Magical Kenya, date of retrieval 15.04.2011)

There are 1,089 species of birds in Kenya; this represents 11% of the world's species. The most known are the flamingoes in Lake Nakuru National park and the ostrich. Bird watching safaris offer a wide range of bird life. In some of the destinations the tourist can spot around 300-600 different varieties of birds depending on the migration patterns. Birdlife is spread out around the country from the national parks to the cities. The proximity of Kenya to the south of Sudan and the west of Somali makes it a favorable destination as a business hub for Non Governmental Organizations and relief organizations. Kenya's infrastructure facilitates humanitarian activities for people affected by civil war and most of the areas that relief organizations are situated can be accessed by air. This makes Kenya a very important destination and a life line for many communities past the country borders.

Kenya has about 48 reserves, national parks and marine parks with a combination of beautiful scenic resources which have a wide variety of wildlife, marine, bird life and other man-made tourist resources giving it strong potential for developing a high performing tourism industry if fully exploited. But very little progress will be achieved with Kenya's negative publicity blown out of proportion by international media, travel bans, low publicity, marketing in addition to poor planning and funds misappropriation. There is a need to realize that tourism is a more important aspect and different from other potential export activities: the consumer of the services comes to the exporting country rather than having services delivered to him at home. An analysis of the economy of tourism therefore requires more attention to transport and marketing arrangements than in most other industries. (Al Jazeera, date of retrieval 07.01.2011)

5.2 Tourism in Masai Mara

Masai Mara National Reserve is located 270 kms from Kenya's capital Nairobi. It covers an area of 1510 km² in south-western Kenya, the northern section of the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem, covering approximately 25,000 km². The Masai Mara shares its borders with Serengeti Park to the

south, the Siria escarpment to the west and Masai communal land to the north, east and west. Rainfall in the ecosystem increases distinctly along the south-east and north-west gradient, which varies in depending on seasons. The Sand, Talek and Mara are the major rivers that serve as the water sources in the reserve. Shrubs and trees line the river banks and cover hills. (Parkinson, Phillips, Gourlay 2006, 286-290.)

5.2.1 Transport infrastructure in Masai Mara

There are various ways to get to Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR); however it depends on the mode of transport that the tourist chooses to travel. This is because of the different experiences, preferences and reliability that accompany the transportation choice. The fastest way to get to MMNR is by air, this offer a great overview of the great landscape across the Great Rift Valley. The flights take about 60 minutes from Nairobi and the tourists have many options to choose from as there are eight airstrips where the planes land. The airstrips are Mara Keekorok, Mara Kichwa, Mara Musiara, Mara Ngerende, Mara Serena, Mara Shikar and Mara Siana. They flight schedules are very dependable as many of the companies offer three flights daily to selected destinations. But there is an option to charter flights or hire helicopters to / from MMNR and other destination around Kenya. (Air Kenya, date of retrieval 15.02.2011)

Road transport is one of the most used modes of transport in the Masai Mara National Reserve as it offers a very unique way to view the country side and sample the local cultures along the way. This gives the tourists a chance to interact with the local who sell artifacts and ornaments as mementos to remember their safari. There are many travel agencies that offer road transport with knowledgeable tour guide drives who can come in handy because their skills can be very useful during the journey. The vehicles are also well equipped for viewing the wildlife in the reserve. There are also camper vans that can be used for camping as they have most of the equipment needed for camping and they are very popular with students or low budget travels. Tourist can hire vehicles and drive themselves but it's not encouraged for first time travelers. However the road system can present it fair share of difficulty as the roads in some areas are not paved and in the rainy season the vehicles may find it impossible to venture in some areas in the reserve. In contrast the National Reserve roads are not paved; this is to maintain the park in a natural state and for ecological purposes. (Magical Kenya, date of retrieval 15.02.2011)

The most interesting and captivating way for aerial viewing of the wildlife and the landscape is by hot air balloon. The balloon rides are normally in early morning as it presents the best weather conditions. The duration of the balloon rides are about three hours, the tourist have a chance to have breakfast before they embark on the trip and lunch after their trip in the open savannah. The companies operating the hot air balloon trips will present the passengers with a certificate after the trip as proof that you have been on the air balloon ride which is also a form of advertising of the services that they provided.

5.2.2 The image of Masai Mara

The mention of Masai Mara depicts an environment of people mainly the Masai and Dorobo tribes that have lived with wildlife and have maintained their culture unchanged by the modern world. The Masai Mara's image can be described by the characteristics associated with the place, which includes the wildlife, bird watching and the tribes' people. Wildlife is the main attraction in the Masai Mara there is are many species that can be found and they are Lions, Cheetahs, leopards, spotted hyena, sliver backed jackals, Wildebeest/ Gnus, Hippotomous, black rhinos, zebra, Masai giraffe, elephants, buffalo, thomsons gazelle, topi, kongoni, elands, impala, mongoose, baboons, crocodiles, snakes etc. All the above named animals are unique in their own way but there are some that are more spectacular. (Lonely planet, date of retrieval 24.03.2011)

The big five which compromise of the Elephant, Lions, black rhino, leopard and the buffalo are the highlight of any visitor to the Masai Mara. This particular group of wildlife got their name because of the great challenge that they presented during hunting expeditions. However hunting in Masai Mara is at present illegal but they still hold their titles. Most of the big five can be spotted in the reserve when they are feeding, at the rivers when they are taking a drink or cooling down under the shade from the high temperature during the day. However the leopard is one of the hardest animal to spot, this is because they are mostly situated on the trees. But having a good tour guide and patience, you may be guaranteed a rare viewing of the leopard. The lions, cheetahs and leopards of Masai Mara have been featured and documented by the big cat diary in show that documented their daily activities. This show has been broadcasted around the world giving travels an insight of what to be expected of a visit to Masai Mara National Reserve.

There are various ways of viewing the wildlife, this includes drives night and day, nature walks, and horse ridding. Many tour companies and the lodges offer specialized tour guides who's ex-

expertise can transform the experience. The game drives are conducted early morning, late evening or during the night, this is because most of the animal hunt when the weather is cool to escape the hot temperatures during the day. The tour guides are able to choose areas where tourists can spot the wildlife this is based on their skills to select habitats where certain animals can be spotted and not to disturb them when taking photos. Nature walks are situated in areas near the lodges for the tourists to get a feeling of the wild side of MMNR. Some bird's species and small mammals like monkeys can be spotted in these areas as the larger mammals are too dangerous to approach. Horse riding through the plains of the Mara, presents a perfect opportunity away from the lodges and vehicles. The riding can be from camp to camp or from lodge to lodge over a few days sharing the open grasslands with herds of wildebeests, topis, zebra's, gazelles etc.

The great migration is one of the biggest attractions in the reserve, the largest concentration of wildlife in the planet with an estimated number of about three million. This includes more than 1.3 million wildebeest, 500,000 Thomson's gazelles, 200,000 zebras, 97,000 topi and 18,000 eland. This is nature's most amazing event crossing the Mara River annually, during the month of July as the herds migrate north from the Serengeti to Masai Mara in search of fresh pasture, and during the month of October they cross back to the south in Serengeti following the rains to better grazing areas. (Nation Media, date of retrieval 24.03.2011)

There is a relationship that is between the wildebeests and the zebras. The wildebeests are able to smell the rains and guide the other herds to other the other side of the river with the leader of the herds leading the way as they have memorized the route, while the zebras have better eye sight than the wildebeests and can be able to spot danger. However this is a cruel method from nature that only the strong survive the journey.

There are over 450 species of birds in the Masai Mara; the most common and easiest to spot is the ostrich as it's the largest bird in the world. The other species that can be found are honey guide, white headed vultures, lappet-faced vulture, ruppell's vulture, helmeted guinea fowl, Egyptian goose, hammer kop, marabou stork, secretary bird etc. The honey guide is one of the birds that corroborates with human beings for the benefit of all involved, this is done by the bird making a call that can be translated by the Masai to follow it to where it can smell the honey. After leading the way the bird changes the call when they are near the bee hive, and when the Masai have spotted the hive they have to get the honey and share it with the honey bird. (Lonely planet, date of retrieval 24.03.2011)

The Masai and Dorobo tribe's people are the traditional inhabitants and have lived around the national reserve for many centuries. The reserve is named after the Masai people and the mara means the grassland plains dotted with shrubs. They are semi nomadic people who live under communal land management system. They grazing of livestock are based on seasonal rotation which allows them to utilize resources in a sustainable way. Sections are managed by territories and guarded by warriors. However, during the dry season, the sections boundaries are lifted and grazing animals throughout the land until the rainy season. Masai traditional land agreement states "no one should be denied access to natural resources such as water and land". Their culture is a tourist attraction which is depicted by visits to the cultural villages where you can experience there way of life, song and dance, ceremonies, there style of clothing, bead works, artifacts and the knowledge of their surroundings.

Masai village visits present rare opportunities to learn about the Masai and Dorobo culture. The villages are set within driving distance from most of the lodges and while here tourists can enjoy song and dance from the Masai. Visitors who would like to sample the way of life and food from the Masai can stay in the traditional homes or camp within the homesteads. The lodges mostly organize meals outside with the opportunity to enjoy your meals on the backdrop of the open savannah and the Masai dances. Many Masai ceremonies and rituals are very popular and have attracted large numbers of tourists in Masai Mara. (Masai Association, date of retrieval 24.03.2011)

The Dorobo have a similar way of life as the Masai but there number are reducing and there way of life disappearing. They have very good hunting skills where they use their brains to outwit lions to steal some of the meat from the lions kill. These hunting skills have been passed down for many generations, their stories narrated to many but few believed. However it was documented by BBC human planet to be viewed by the rest of the world. (BBC Human Planet Grasslands, date of retrieval 24.03.2011)

5.3 Factors affecting tourism in Masai Mara

Destinations in many developing countries have various factors affecting the tourism industry. Some of the factors are similar or may vary depending on the location of the destination. The factors that affect tourism in Masai Mara include: - low marketing communications targeting the local tourists, this has been a major problem in developing new strategies on how to attract the local

tourist from learning institutions, small and medium sized companies to Masai Mara especially during the low season when there are few international tourists. Most of the marketing is directed to the international tourists and large organization operating in Kenya. Compared to other destinations located along the Kenyan coastline which attracts a high percentage of local tourists during the festive season, public holiday and school holidays. (Magical Kenya, date of retrieval 20.04.2011)

Competition from other National parks and reserves located in other parts of Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa has presented the biggest challenge. The national parks in Kenya that are situated closer to the cities and the Kenyan coast attract tourists who are traveling to the country for short durations and they combine destinations that are more closely linked to maximize on their time spent in the country by having different experiences from the areas they have visited. The destinations in South Africa and Tanzania have a more elaborated marketing system and more marketing resources compared to Kenya. The proximity of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania is the main competition of the Masai Mara as they share the same ecosystem, which makes the two destinations to be nearly identical. The migration pattern of wildlife between the two areas is the determining factors of where the tourists will be visiting.

Security is an essential aspect when the tourists are choosing their destination. Masai Mara National Reserve has a well detailed security service from the Kenya Police, Wildlife Rangers and private security companies that ensures everybody in the area is well protected. However, during the Kenya general election in 2007, which lead political instability was a difficult time in Masai Mara as the number of arrivals was at an all time low and most of the tourists travelled to other destinations. The uncertainty of the outcome and stability in Kenya after election, presents a reoccurring fear of the situation after every five years. Wildlife poaching in the Masai Mara is still prevalent, this is mainly from elephant and rhino tusks, hides and skins from leopards, zebras etc. and game meat, these illegally gained commodities fetch high prices making it more lucrative to the poachers. This is one factor that can change the future of Masai Mara as the wildlife is the main attractions and safe guarding the future depends on the conservation of the environment and the wildlife. (Kenya Wildlife Service, date of retrieval 20.04.2011)

The infrastructure in the Masai Mara has its bright side which is the lodges and resorts which are in the top list in many destinations around the world. However the roads to and from Masai Mara have some areas that are deplorable and in poor condition. This is a major setback for the tour-

ists, as they travel by air, missing out on the opportunity to experience the journey and landscape by road. The entry points to Masai Mara are not well equipped to handle electronic transaction for park entrance fees and lounge area where the tourist can wait or engage in other activities as there documents are being processed.

Conflicts between people living around Masai Mara and wildlife are widespread, especially during the dry season. This is caused by the human encroachment into the reserve to feed their livestock and the wildlife has easier targets on the livestock, the wildlife raiding the crops in the farmers that are situated around the reserve. There are conservation agencies in the Masai Mara that are responsible for compensation to limit the damages. Many of the factors affecting tourism in Masai Mara can be addressed and projects set in place to enable the reserve to achieve its full potential as a top destination.

5.4 Tourism marketing trends in Kenya

Tourism marketing has experienced a lot of changes to keep up with the technology in communication with customers and targeting new markets. This has allowed for much more information to be delivered on a short duration of time to the targeted person more efficiently and a faster method of responding to inquiries. The advance in technology has shortened the flight time between destination and hence more activities for the tourist in the destination of travel. Tourism marketing around the world for the Kenyan tourism industry is mainly by the Kenyan government and coordinated by the Ministry of tourism. They have various regional offices around the country and several cities around the world.

The main form of marketing is promotion, participating in travel exhibitions in Kenya and other annual events that are held around the world. The events offer business opportunities to market Kenya as a tourist destination to potential customers and also tour operators are informed of the new developments in tourism products that's are available. The tour operators are the main link between the tourist and the destination; they are able to market the travel destinations to many of their customers through direct marketing. Many of the tour operators have branches around the world or have partners in the destinations and the tourists have the opportunity to choose from different destinations. The level of services offered to the tourist by tour operators, offers a sense of satisfaction as they can associate the services to the organization and they are assured quality services. (Kenya Wildlife Service, date of retrieval 26.04.2011)

Kenyan tourism has diversified over the years to offer more interesting activities for the tourists. They include marketing Kenya as a golf destination, the Kenyan environment makes it ideal for golfing around the year and with organization sponsoring golf tournament in Kenya and the upgrade of the golf courses to international standards, has added to the activities available for tourist. The increase in special interest groups who are more interested in high adrenaline activities such as mountain biking, mountain climbing through the rough terrain has been on the raise in Kenya. The increased demand can be attributed to target marketing to the tourists; this has opened new destinations where the tourists can experience different variety of recreation activities. Marketing diversification in entertainment events and cultural festivals has opened new destinations and activities for the tourist to participate, most of the cultural events have been popularized by having the information about the event available to the tour operators. The introduction of new tour packages that include different activities in the destinations, has transformed the Kenyan tourism industry to attract more tourists.

Internet marketing has been the most important communication channel to the local and international tourists. The information about different destinations in company websites provide an avenue where the tourists can choose from different destination that are well suited with their budget and choice of destination. More marketing interest to off-peak seasons to low budget and local tourists has increased the number of tourist arrivals keeping many destinations in Kenya booming with business all year round. International tour operators target customer within their database and potential customers to market destinations that are in other parts of the continent, many of the companies operate from their host countries and partner with tour operations in the destination host country. This has encouraged cooperation between local and international tour operators to provide services for tourist in different destinations. (Magical Kenya, date of retrieval 26.05.2011)

5.5 Tourism development trends in Kenya

The tourism industry in Kenya has to continue evolving and developing to ensure that it's a competitive tourist destination in future. This has prompted the government to invest more on the country's infrastructure mainly transport and communication. Over the past five years the Kenyan government in cooperation with other development partners has increased the development of the road and rail industry to ensure that tourist get to their destinations to with less or minimal

interruption. The completion of the fiber optic cable to join Kenya and the rest of the world has lowered the cost of internet services; this has offered numerous opportunities to tour companies who relied on the satellite internet. In many of Kenya's tourist destination and cities there has been an increase in development of real estate to cater for the increasing numbers of tourist arrivals, to offer quality and different variety of services to the tourists. In the Kenyan coast there has been an increase in investment from the private sector that caters for recreation activities such as water sports. This is a new market that has huge potential within the young generation in the country. (Magical Kenya, date of retrieval 26.04.2011)

Many of Kenya's destinations are changing to all season, by introducing new events such as music festival, sporting events in the off-peak seasons to increase the number of tourist arrivals. This has transformed many destinations which are now very popular with the local tourists during the weekends and public holidays. This is a result of aggressive marketing to local tourists compared with the previous marketing campaigns that targeted international tourists. Table 1 shows the analysis of products according to customer groups in an approach that allows the organizations to value what products and customers segments are important. Development in eco-tourism resorts has increased the cooperation between the resorts and the communities around the destination. The increase in demand by tourists in eco-tourism has encouraged the companies to build resorts that are more eco-friendly in using the local raw materials and resources. In the Masai Mara the involvement of the Masai people in conserving the environment through sustainable use of the resources, wildlife conservation using the skills that the local tribes have passed through the generations has transformed the conservation projects. (Mara Conservancy, date of retrieval 26.04.2011)

Table 1: Ansoff matrix (Cheverton 2004, 106)

	Existing products	New products
Existing Markets	1. Market Penetration	3. Product Development
New Markets	2. Market Development	4. Diversification

There is need for development of infrastructure in Kenya; this can be achieved by attracting more investors to the country. Upgrading the infrastructure to cater for more business travelers with facilities that are available in other parts of the world has increased with development of business parks such as Tatu city which aim to provide services for business that outsource their business or production to other countries. The way forward for Kenya tourism industry is developing the existing destination to include new activities that engage the tourist to have a different experience when they visit the destination.

6 RESULTS

The research had a sample of 50 people who answered the questionnaires. The method used to select the respondents was random, from tourists, local residents, employees, travel agent managers and managers from the Masai Mara National Reserve. (MMNR)

TABLE 2: Number of respondents

Category of respondents	n	%
Tourists	14	28
Local residents	15	30
Employees	18	36
Managers	3	6
Total	50	100

Figure 2 show the age of the respondents. The average age of respondents was 26-35. The ages were from 15 - over 40 with 53% male and 47% female. Over half of the tourist respondents originated from European countries and the others were from United States of America.

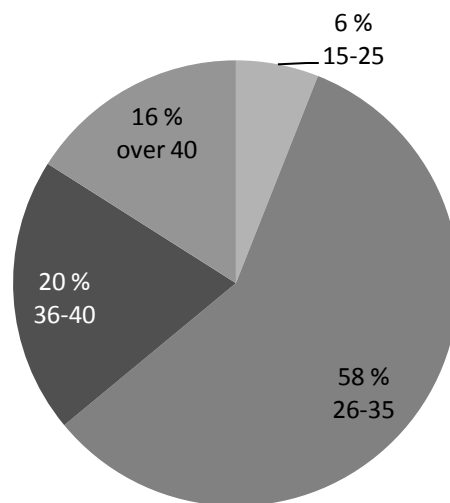


FIGURE 2: Age of tourists visiting MMNR (n=14)

Table 3 shows the media which the tourist learned about MMNR. There were 21% of the respondents who learned about Masai Mara National Reserve through print media, 43% electronic media, 29% digital media, and lastly 7% friends.

TABLE 3: Media through which tourists learned about MMNR

Media	n	%
Print media	3	21
Electronic media	6	43
Digital media	4	29
Friends	1	7
Total	14	100

Figure 3 shows the usefulness of the information sources used by the tourists. The respondents were asked to choose from a scale of 1 to 5 (1 representing not useful and 5 representing very useful) the usefulness of each source of information. The respondents rated trade fairs/exhibitions, word of mouth and websites very useful. Television, public relations/personal selling, brochures, newspapers and magazines had an average rating from the respondents.

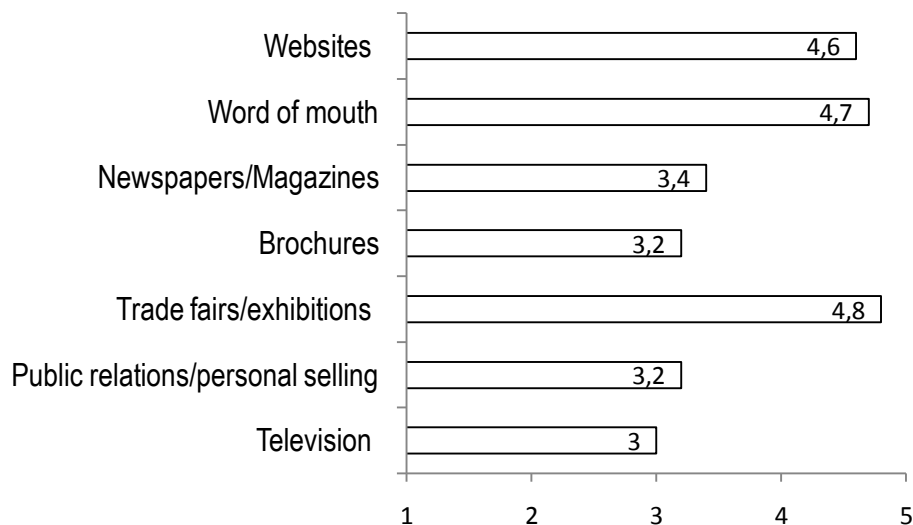


FIGURE 3: Averages of respondents' rating of usefulness of source of information.

Table 4 shows the mode of transport used by the tourists to travel to Masai Mara National Reserve. 43% of respondents preferred to travel with tour vans, 21% with low cost airlines, 36% preferred camper vans and no one traveled by their own car or charter airlines. The question the respondents were asked who accompanied them during their travel, over half of the respondents traveled with their family and the other percentage traveled with friends.

TABLE 4: Mode of travel used by tourist to travel to MMNR

Mode of transport	n	%
Own car	-	-
Tour van	6	43
Low cost airline	3	21
Charter airline	-	-
Camper van	5	36
Total	14	100

The question about the number of times the tourists had visited MMNR, 86% of the respondents were on their first visit and 14% were on their second. The average number of nights the tourists spent at MMNR was three nights with an exception 14% of the respondents who spend over seven nights. Figure 4 show reasons why the tourists visited MMNR. The respondents were asked to choose one of choice or have a combination depending on the purpose of their visit. The respondents had different combinations: 31% safari, 22% culture, 18% rest and relaxation, 11% fun, 9% religion and 5%health. No one listed sports.

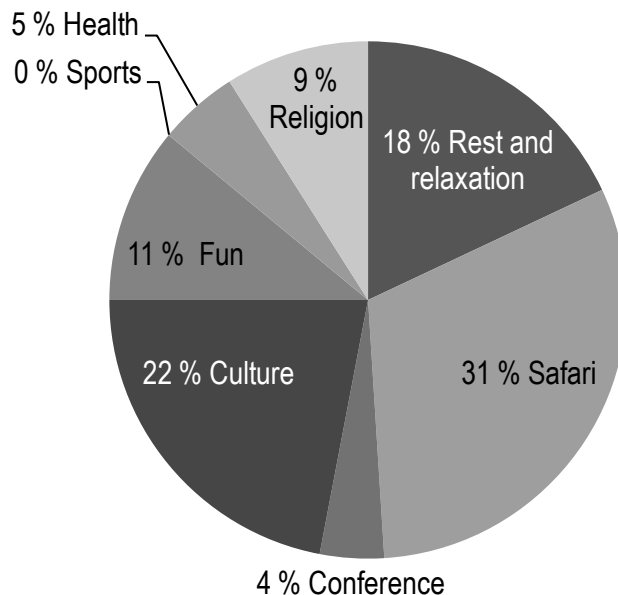


FIGURE 4: Reasons for tourists visiting MMNR. (n=14)

The next section was to find out if the tourist expectations were fulfilled at Masai Mara National Reserve, during their visit. Figure 5 show 36% of the respondents answered excellent, over 50%

average and 14% were less than average. Nobody answered that visit did not at all meet their expectations.

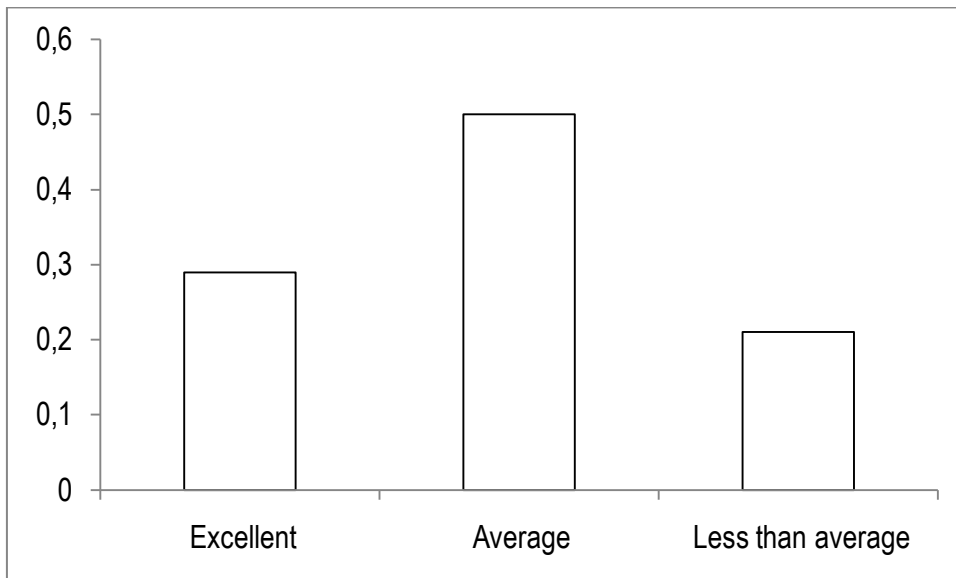


FIGURE 5: Did the visit to MMNR meet the tourists' expectations? (n=14)

Figure 6 shows the rating the quality of service the tourists received at MMNR, 29 % of the respondents answered they received excellent service, 50 % average and 21% below average. Nobody rated the services provided were poor.

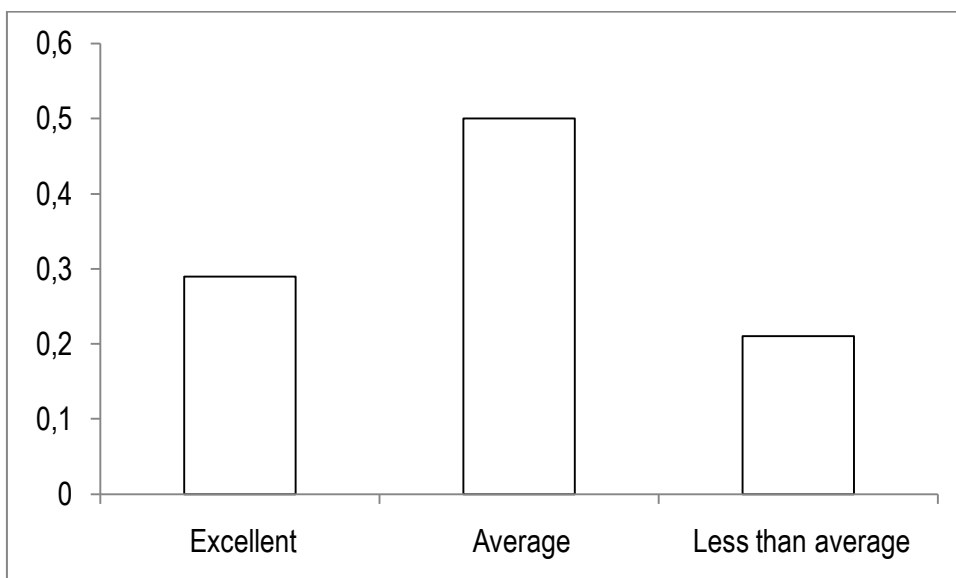


FIGURE 6: Rating the quality of service the tourists received at MMNR. (n=14)

The last question (See APPENDIX 2 on page 53) was for the tourists to give suggestions for improvement in marketing MMNR. Many of the respondents felt that there should be more information about the events that held in Masai Mara National Reserve. This was mainly on the cultural events that are not publicized to the tourists. They recommended to more aggressive marketing as many of the tourists were very interested in learning more about the Masai culture, while others were interested in experiencing their daily life by living in the communities. Most of the respondents recommended that the MMNR should create more awareness by marketing in different media to reach more potential tourist, while also they should change the packages offered to include other activities to make the overall experience better.

The next section of the research questionnaires was answered by the lodge managers at Masai Mara National reserve, managers of travel agencies, employees and local residents around the Masai Mara National Reserve. (See APPENDIX 1 on page 47) The average age of the respondents was 36 – 40 years. The ages were from 26 to over 40 years, with 63% male and 37% female. The next question asked the respondents what was the most visited attraction in MMNR, over half of the respondents listed the wildebeest migration on the Mara River was the most visited attraction, this was followed by the big five and the cultural visit to the Masai villages. Figure 7 shows the respondents assessment of marketing MMNR by the Kenya Ministry of Tourism. 28% of the respondents answered very high, 47% normal, 17% low and 8% low.

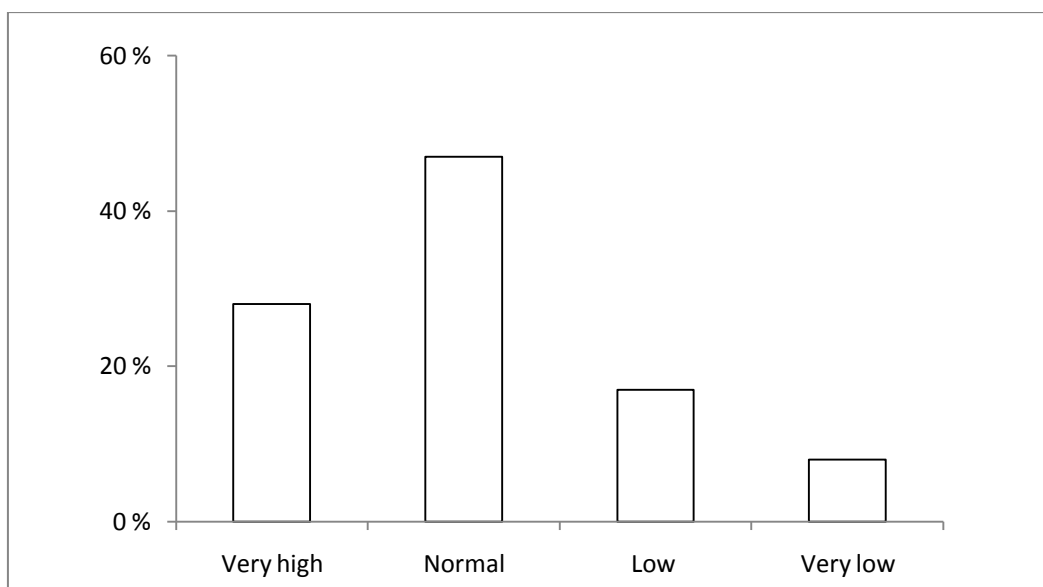


FIGURE 7: Respondent assessment on marketing MMNR. (n=36)

Many of the respondents felt that development of cultural tourism is one aspect which was gaining momentum due to tourism development projects in Masai Mara National Reserve and it's playing a very crucial role in terms of improving the communities' welfare. The conservation of Masai Mara National Reserve has boosted lives of many local communities by attracting foreign tourist who supports the locals with money that has allowed them to perform cultural entertainment through music, dance and drama for the tourists for economic gains. This has also helped to improve corporation between reserve management and the local community.

Before the establishment of community conservation and development programs around Masai Mara National Reserve, local community revealed that their relationship with Reserve management was strained because of various problems such as loss of livestock to wild animal, crop raiding on the farms surrounding MMNR, lack of grazing land for the Masai pastoralists. But with the introduction co-operation programs, local communities have been involved in the decision making and planning activities through committees such as Community Reserve Advisory Committees (CPAC) to give the reserve official the ideas of managing the resources without affecting the local residents. And Reserve Parish Communities (PPCs) which serve as a linkage between the management and the local community. These committees ensure that the views of the local community are addressed and an amicable agreement on how to deal with similar problems in future. This has greatly improved the relationship between the local community and Reserve management

The high season mid June to October and mid December to February is the busiest time in the year at Masai Mara National Reserve. Most of the respondents felt that there should be more marketing on camping and nature trails. This combination would increase the number of visitors during the low season and mainly targeted to local residents and students. Nature walks would offer visitors an opportunity to explore and learn about the environment.

Figure 8 shows the rating by the respondents on the services provided by the Narok County and the local government who are responsible for managing MMNR. 14% of the respondents answered excellent, 42% average, 33% below average and 11% poor.

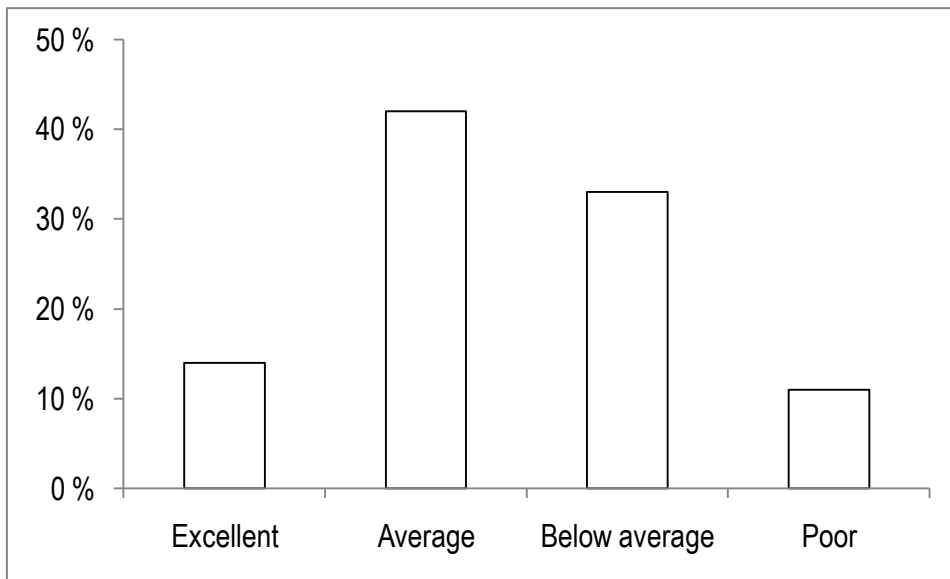


FIGURE 8: Rating of services provided by Narok county and local government in MMNR. (n=36)

The respondents felt that the Kenyan government should aggressively market Masai Mara more to the local tourists and international tourists. The respondents recommended that there should be more advertisement in the print and digital media targeting the local tourists, mainly the young generation and appoint local athletic personalities who have represented the country in athletic competitions around the world to be marketing ambassadors of Masai Mara National Reserve.

Many of the respondents felt that the government and the organizations that manage the MMNR should involve the local communities when making future plans and marketing strategies. The respondents recommended that they ought to have a system where the local communities can present their ideas and follow up to ensure that the projects started are transparent to minimize wastage of resource through corrupt practices.

7 CONCLUSION

The research was about tourism marketing in Masai Mara National Reserve. The aim was to find out how MMNR is marketed as a tourist destination and how to improve marketing methods to target different groups of tourists to increase the number of tourist arrivals throughout the seasons. The resorts in Masai Mara, Kenyan government and tour operators used various marketing communication strategies to reach out to their customers. There was some new information that was gathered from the questionnaires answers, providing new ideas to the author. However there could have been more in depth answers from interviewing managers from the resorts in Masai Mara but it never materialized as the interview schedules kept on changing for different reason, while some never responded to the request. The factors affecting tourism in Kenya and MMNR results from the level of transport infrastructure available in the country. In comparison to the resorts and lodges that have high-quality accommodation facilities. Political instability was the main issue that affected tourism; this was before and after the Kenya general elections as there has been violence during this period and many tourists prefer traveling to other destinations.

One conclusion that can be derived from the research is that many of the resorts in Masai Mara depend mostly on tour operators for a large percentage of their business. According to the study, promotion of MMNR is mainly by the Kenyan government, international tour operators and hotel chains that have properties in the area. Most of the resorts have minimal promotion activities which affect their business when there is low demand especially during the low season. The marketing of MMNR should include a strategic plan to appeal to different markets during the high and low season, by having activities, facilities and programs that cater to diverse market interests. The resorts use the internet and other advertising media to reach their target market, which makes it very difficult to measure its effectiveness. This is because most of the tourists prefer using travel operators from their country of origin in planning their travel arrangements, which may influence their choice of destination. However, the resort websites have improved to be more user-friendly, provide more information about the resort and also the destination.

Traditional marketing communication still has a grip of the changing technological market. According to the results in the study, the current business environment in MMNR relies on networks between the resorts and tour operators. Advertising of the resorts through word of mouth depends on the level of service received by the tourists and goes a long way in establishing connec-

tions for future business. Some of the resorts in MMNR invest less resources in advertising; mostly they invest more on tour operators by providing special discount rates and in return they get higher tourists arrivals in there resort.

Another conclusion derived from the research is that some of the smaller resorts in MMNR should join hotel chains; this would ensure they are better placed in the ranking criteria while delivering higher level of services. Joining the hotel chains that have a large customer database would also give them an advantage in getting higher end customers for maximum capitalization during the high season and achieving greater success. Most of the camping sites in MMNR should advertise in social media as it offers an efficient and highly targeted communication channel. The study confirms that there is a large following of the activities on the internet and they should create awareness among local tourists. The best attribute of the internet is that they can reach a large population in a short duration of time and target the potential clients during holidays and festive seasons.

Promotion activities that can be include is having legendary personalities from former and current champions in athletics as the marketing ambassadors of Masai Mara National Reserve. However, this is would be an expensive venture but it worthwhile as Kenya has many international athletes. This would ensure that the customers to be able to relate the product in relation of to the marketing ambassadors. The concept of having a state of the art check in system in the Masai Mara entrance that reduces the time spent finalizing the paper work and collection park entrance fees, should include a mini museum where the tourists can learn more about the environment and wildlife. There should be more emphasize towards sustainable tourism in Masai Mara by having projects that deal with protecting the ecosystem through sustainable tourism developments plans which monitor the impact of tourism on the economic and environmental aspects. The involvement of the local community in the current and future plans for sustainable tourism is vital as the relationship is beneficial and essential for consultation regarding any major developments in Masai Mara.

The study has introduced a variety of ideas, communication methods to promote and market tourism in Masai Mara National Reserve. The decision of where and when the players involve will invest in the communication methods, depends on their choice and target market. Finding the right combination or mix that will work, requires strategic planning and time for implementation. In

order to get the best results out of the promotion methods used a lot of consideration of the cultures involved in the process and linking it with their expectations.

8 DISCUSSION

The entire thesis process was very intriguing and personal as the topic was the career path the author would like to pursue. The research process helped me to improve my skills in marketing, tourism, time management and research. Most of the books were available in our school library; however I had to get additional material from Oulu city library to read how other destinations are marketed in order to establish how to stay ahead of the competition. The current information about Kenyan tourism was gathered from the internet and documentaries. In the beginning of the study the topic was very wide and after discussion with my tutor teacher I focused on Tourism Marketing in Masai Mara National Reserve. After the directive seminar I had a clear vision of accomplishing my goal.

The overall thesis process was a learning experience for the author. Communicating with the person responsible in distribution and collection of the questionnaires was a very delicate assignment as the work was voluntary, therefore more time and patience was required to accomplish the task. The questionnaires could have limited the scope of the answers given as some of the people are likely to go through them very quickly or they are not willing to participate in the study. However, if there was a set prize for the participants in the study, it might have motivated many people to participate in the study.

The data collection was from tourists, managers, employees, local business owners in Masai Mara and managers from tour operators in Kenya. Some of the Managers at MMNR contacted for phone interviews did not respond to the request. This was very frustrating and time consuming as most of them did not even respond to the emails. However the data collected can be considered to be of quality as the questionnaires were well answered, covering different groups that reflects what is working and where there needs to be some improvement.

The research could be furthered by commissioning a marketing communication plan for all the organizations in Masai Mara to have a publication magazine that can be featured in the print media for local tourists to be informed about new developments and a website that has all the information about the destination and links to different resorts and camping facilities in Masai Mara. The main challenge for Masai Mara is to be a sustainable tourist destination and diversification of the activities available to the tourists in order to achieve its full potential.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Dear respondent,

I am George Mungai a student of Oulu University of Applied Sciences, undertaking a research on Marketing Tourism in Masai Mara National Reserve. The information you disclose will be relevant to academic purposes, however the information is confidential and a will not be disclosed or used by any third party. Please take a sometime to participate by answering the following questions on the questionnaire provided as it will assist me in achieving results for the above named aim.

You are kindly requested to tick in the appropriate box or fill answers in the space provided.

Section A: General information

1. Age: Please tick the appropriate.

15-25	<input type="checkbox"/>	26-35	<input type="checkbox"/>
36-40	<input type="checkbox"/>	40+	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Gender:

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Which choice best describes your current occupation?

- A. local business owner
- B. reserve manager
- C. reserve employee
- D. Other, what.....

Section B:

4. What is the most visited attraction in the Masai Mara National Reserve?

.....

.....

5. In your own assessment, how can you grade the marketing of Masai Mara national Reserve by Kenya Ministry of Tourism?

- a. Very high
- b. Normal
- c. Low
- d. Very low

6. What other attractions should be more aggressively marketed at Masai Mara National Reserve?

.....
.....

7. Do the local communities around Masai Mara benefit from the national reserve?

Yes

No

8. If yes, briefly explain what the benefits are?

.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Do you know some of the challenges encountered by local communities, lodges and local business owners at the Masai Mara National Reserve?

Yes

No

10. If yes, mention the challenges you would like to be addressed.

.....
.....
.....

11. What are the busiest months of the year at the Masai Mara National Reserve?

.....
.....

12. What activities would like to be introduced at Masai Mara National Reserve, to increase the number of visitors in the low season?

.....
.....
13. How would you rate the quality of service and assistance provided by the Narok county and the local government?

- a. Excellent
- b. Average
- c. Below average
- d. Poor

13. Do you think the government is doing enough to promote marketing of Masai Mara National Reserve internationally?

.....
.....
.....
.....

13. Please comment below any suggestions for the improvement of marketing Masai Mara National Reserve.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thanks for your cooperation.

Dear respondent,

I am George Mungai a student of Oulu University of Applied Sciences, undertaking a research on Marketing Tourism in Masai Mara National Reserve. The information you disclose will be relevant to academic purposes, however the information is confidential and a will not be disclosed or used by any third party. Please take a sometime to participate by answering the following questions on the questionnaire provided as it will assist me in achieving results for the above named aim.

You are kindly requested to tick in the appropriate box or fill answers in the space provided.

Section A: Basic information

1. Age: Please tick the appropriate.

15-25

26-35

36-40

40+

2. Gender: Please tick the appropriate

Female

Male

3. What is your country of origin?

Section B: Before coming to Masai Mara National Reserve

4. How did you learn about Masai Mara National Reserve?

a. Print Media (Newspapers, travel magazines etc.)

b. Electronic media (Web pages)

c. Digital media (TV,)

d. Other, what?

5. For the following question, please state the usefulness of these information sources:

	Not Useful	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Very Useful
Websites	1	2	3	4	5
Word of Mouth	1	2	3	4	5
Newspapers/Magazines	1	2	3	4	5
Brochures	1	2	3	4	5
Trade Fairs/Exhibitions	1	2	3	4	5
Public Relations/Personal Selling	1	2	3	4	5
Television	1	2	3	4	5

6. How did you arrive to Masai Mara National Reserve? (*Mark the appropriate answer*)

- Own car
- Tour Van
- With low-cost airline
- Charter airline

Other, what: _____

7. Who is accompanying you on your current visit to this tourist destination? (*Mark the appropriate answer*)

- No one
- Partner
- Family, how many children under the age of 15 are accompanying you? _____
- Friends
- Co-workers
- Business partners
- Other, what: _____

8. Is this your first visit Masai Mara National Reserve? (*Mark the appropriate answer*)

No. → How many times have you visited this tourist destination in the past? _____

Yes.

9. How many nights are you planning to stay at Masai Mara National Reserve: _____

10. What are the main reasons for your visit to this tourist destination? (*Mark the appropriate answer*)

Rest and relaxation

Safari

Attending a conference, congress, seminar, and other forms of educations

Culture

Fun

Sports

Health

Religious reasons

Other, what: _____

Section C: During your visit at Masai Mara National Reserve.

11. In your own assessment, did Masai Mara National Reserve your meet your expectations?

a. Excellent

b. Average

c. Less than average

d. Not at all

12. How would you rate the quality of services provided at Masai Mara National Reserve?

a. Excellent

b. Average

c. Below average

d. Poor

13. Please comment below any suggestions for the improvement of marketing Masai Mara National Reserve.

.....
.....

Thanks for your cooperation